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ABSTRACT

A facilitator who was subsequently assigned to the principalship discusses the implementation of the Standards of Excellence model in Philips Elementary School (Denver, Colorado). In implementing the components of Standards of Excellence, principals were required to assume the role of instructional leader. Accordingly, assistance was rendered to familiarize principals with the research, enable them to present the material to their staffs, and help them direct staff in the self-assessment process. The second step for the principal was then to establish a committee to interpret the data gathered from the assessments. After two years, significant progress has been made in schools' abilities to develop long-range plans, respond to outside mandates and changing community needs, and assess and plan for curricular changes. Changes at Philips School include (1) a school brochure and a recent reception for area realtors, (2) increased student interest in tracking academic progress, (3) increased teacher participation in academic issues, (4) voluntary sharing of daily teaching objectives by teaching staff, and (5) increased requests about the school by parents of prospective students at the intermediate grade levels. Modeling has been the key to these changes, whether in instructional conferences, staff meetings, or classroom teaching. (TE)

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STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

PRESENTED BY CORA REDDEN, PRINCIPAL,
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AT THE ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, ON
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IN IMPLEMENTING THE **STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE** MODEL IN THE DENVER SCHOOLS, I WEAR THE HARD HAT TO MAKE SURE THE CONSTRUCTION DESIGNED IN THE ORIGINAL BLUEPRINT IS HIGH QUALITY--FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS IN CENTRAL OFFICE AS A PRINCIPAL FACILITATOR AND THIS YEAR AS A PRACTICING PRINCIPAL.

AS DESCRIBED ELSEWHERE, THE FINAL DOCUMENT, **"STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE,"** BEGAN AS A RESEARCH PROJECT AND GREW TO BECOME A CRITICAL INFLUENCE IN CREATING DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE WAYS DENVER'S ADMINISTRATORS, STAFFS, AND WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES VIEWED AND OPERATED THEIR SCHOOLS. IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT WITH LITTLE PROMPTING, WHEN IMPLEMENTED, **"STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE"** GREATLY ASSISTED INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS IN COMPLETING TASKS RELATED TO:

1. PROGRAM PLANNING
2. GOAL SETTING.

WITHOUT EXCEPTION, ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFFS WHICH UTILIZED THE ASSESSMENT TOOLS INCLUDED IN THE DOCUMENT, FATHERED RICH AND VALID DATA THAT SUPPORTED THEIR PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESSES TO:

- DETERMINE SCHOOL GOALS
- PLAN STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
- DEVELOP MANDATED HUMAN RELATIONS ACTIVITIES.

EA 017 708

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

I WILL CITE SHORTLY FOR YOU SPECIFIC INCIDENTS AT MY SCHOOL WHICH SUPPORT THIS STATEMENT.

THIS EVENING, I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU A REVIEW OF CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN DENVER'S SCHOOLS--FIRST, AS A PERSON ASSIGNED TO ASSIST PRINCIPALS IN THEIR ROLES AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS AND, SECONDLY, AS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL.

IN IMPLEMENTING THE COMPONENTS OF **"STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE,"** MANY OF OUR PRINCIPALS WERE FORCED TO ABANDON OLD PRACTICES AND ASSUME NEW ONES. NO LONGER COULD THEY OPERATE SOLELY AS A BUILDING MANAGER, BUT HAD TO UNDERSTAND AND FUNCTION AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER. REQUIRED TO PERFORM IN THIS ROLE, COUPLED WITH MANDATES OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROVIDING UNIFIED SCHOOLS WAS NOT EASY FOR ALL OF OUR 81 ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS. SO HOW DOES ONE GO ABOUT HELPING THIS EFFORT?

STEP ONE, WAS TO <u>BE</u> HELPFUL. CONDUCTING STAFF MEETINGS THAT DEAL WITH INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES <u>SOLELY</u>, IN MANY BUILDINGS, WAS A CHANGE. PREVIOUSLY SEEN AS THE INDIVIDUAL WHO MADE SURE EQUIPMENT WAS IN ORDER, FACILITIES WERE IN GOOD SHAPE AND SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS WERE AVAILABLE, THE PRINCIPAL NOW HAD TO KNOW THE RESEARCH, BE ABLE TO PRESENT THAT INFORMATION TO HIS/HER STAFF AND BE ABLE TO DIRECT WHOLE BUILDINGS IN ASSESSING THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH FINDINGS.

WE PROVIDED ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ITEMS, SAT WITH PRINCIPALS TO PREPARE THEIR PRESENTATIONS, AS WELL AS OBSERVED AND CONFERENCED WITH THEM FOLLOWING THESE SESSIONS. IN SOME SITUATIONS, PRINCIPALS WERE VERY COMFORTABLE STANDING

BEFORE THEIR STAFFS TO SHARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND CONDUCT ASSESSMENTS OF HOW EFFECTIVE THEIR SCHOOLS WERE. IN SOME OTHERS, WE COACHED, REHEARSED, AND MONITORED THESE ACTIVITIES UNTIL BOTH PRINCIPAL AND STAFF FELT COMFORTABLE. EVEN WHEN THE MATERIAL WAS READ, THE PRINCIPAL WAS ON THE LINE.

AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN THE **"STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE"** MATERIALS IS THE SERIES OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL EXIST IN A PARTICULAR BUILDING. FOLLOWING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS, STAFFS HAVE VALUABLE DATA THAT CAN BE USED TO DEVELOP PLANS RELATED TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.

THUS EVOLVED THE SECOND STEP AS A PRINCIPAL FACILITATOR TO HELP INTERPRET THE DATA GATHERED FROM THE ASSESSMENTS.

GIVEN THAT THE POSITION OF THE PRINCIPAL CAN BE LONELY, WE TRIED TO BE SUPPORTIVE DURING THIS PROCESS--ESPECIALLY IN THOSE SITUATIONS WHERE THE PRINCIPAL REQUESTED SUPPORT OR WHERE EXTREME DEFICIENCIES WERE FOUND. IN ANY CASE, WE ENCOURAGED PRINCIPALS TO ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE THAT WOULD FOCUS ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS SO THAT OUR OUTSIDE SUPPORT COULD BE EVENTUALLY WITHDRAWN. IN SOME SITUATIONS, THIS MEANT A NEW COMMITTEE; IN OTHERS, THE TASKS OF A SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE WERE ASSUMED BY AN ALREADY EXISTING COMMITTEE. IN MOST CASES, THE EXISTING COMMITTEE WAS THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE (SIAC). THESE PERSONS ARE CHARGED WITH RESPONDING TO THE HUMAN RELATIONS STIPULATIONS AS WELL AS THE REQUIRED ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS. AS AN ADVISORY GROUP TO THE PRINCIPAL, SIAC MEMBERS PROVIDE AN ON-SITE SUPPORT SYSTEM TO THE PRINCIPAL TO FACILITATE THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS.

AFTER LITTLE MORE THAN TWO YEARS, WE HAVE SEEN REMARKABLE AND POSITIVE CHANGES IN DENVER'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS REPORT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN THEIR SCHOOLS' ABILITIES TO:

- DEVELOP LONG-RANGE PLANS
- RESPOND TO OUTSIDE MANDATES, AS WELL AS CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS
- ASSESS AND PLAN FOR CURRICULAR CHANGES.

WE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS TREND WILL CONTINUE AND EVENTUALLY STABILIZE SO THAT THE LANGUAGE RELATED TO EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS BECOMES AN INTEGRAL PART OF EVERY SCHOOL'S DAILY OPERATION. IN A RECENT SHARING MEETING OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS, THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT SCHOOLS WERE DIFFERENT PLACES WITH THE MODEL AND THAT AS IN ANY CHANGE EFFORT, THE PROCESS WAS DYNAMIC.

THIS FALL, I WAS ASSIGNED TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP OF PHILIPS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AFTER EARLIER SERVING AS THE "SUBSTITUTE PRINCIPAL" DURING MY PREDECESSOR'S ILLNESS. PHILIPS WAS LIKE A GOLD MINE WAITING TO BE FOUND, AND WE'RE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO MAKE IT REALIZE ITS POTENTIAL.

A SCHOOL OF DIVERSITY--BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY--PHILIPS HAS HAD A SOCIAL RATHER THAN INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS. ITS TEACHING STAFF HAS BEEN FAIRLY STABLE, BUT HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN DISTRICT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION, I.E., MASTERY LEARNING, BASIC SKILLS, COOPERATIVE LEARNING, AND OTHER PROJECTS. WE FOUND ANTIQUATED OR NONEXISTENT STAFF UNDERSTANDING OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS WITH A PARENT CONCERN FOR EXCELLENCE. AT THE SAME TIME, WE WERE IN A COMMUNITY THAT HAD HISTORICALLY EXERCISED ITS RIGHT TO SEEK

OTHER OPTIONS TO EDUCATE THEIR CHILDREN. OUR CHALLENGE WAS TO CHANGE ALL OF THESE PRACTICES AND HAVE A SCHOOL THAT COULD WITHSTAND THE SCRUTINY OF ITS CRITICS WITHOUT CAUSING THE STAFF TO MUTINY.

WE BEGAN BY HOLDING INFORMAL CONFERENCES WITH TEACHERS AND AVAILABLE PARENTS DURING WHICH WE QUERIED THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL AS IT WAS AND WHAT THEY WISHED IT TO BE. THEIR RESPONSES WERE AS VARIED AS THE INTERVIEWEES WERE. HOWEVER, WE HAD SENT OUT A MESSAGE THAT PHILIPS WOULD APPROACH THE INSTRUCTION OF ITS YOUNGSTERS BASED UPON A PLAN THAT WOULD INVOLVE AS MUCH OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AS POSSIBLE.

THAT WAS JUST THE BEGINNING. IN ADDITION TO SHARING WITH STAFF THE INFORMATION ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS, WE ATTEMPTED TO OPERATE AS THOUGH EVERYTHING WAS ALREADY IN PLACE

OUR ACTIONS INCLUDED:

- CONSISTENT VISIBILITY
- FREQUENT CLASSROOM VISITATIONS
- TEACHING CLASSES
- PUTTING UP BULLETIN BOARDS
- WEEKLY BULLETINS THAT INCLUDED INSTRUCTIONAL ITEMS
- REGULAR TEACHER CONFERENCES TO DISCUSS STUDENT PROGRESS AND THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- STAFF DEVELOPMENT GEARED STAFF MEETINGS.
- MONTHLY PRESENTATIONS AT PTSA MEETINGS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL ITEMS.

AS YOU EXAMINE THE SAMPLE UNIT ON ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP THAT IS AVAILABLE IN OUR MATERIALS, YOU WILL FIND THAT THOSE ACTIONS DIRECTLY ADDRESSED THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP. WHAT YOU DO NOT FIND SPELLED OUT, BUT I FIRMLY BELIEVE AND HAVE CONFIRMED BY MY PEERS, IS THAT MODELING HAS BEEN THE KEY TO THE CHANGES WE'VE SEEN--WHETHER IT'S DURING INSTRUCTIONAL CONFERENCES, STAFF MEETINGS, OR TEACHING THE THIRD GRADE SCIENCE CLASS.

WE BELIEVE IT'S WORKING. JUDGING FROM SOME THINGS THAT HAVE OCCURRED, IT MUST BE. IN ORDER TO MODEL THE ELEMENTS OF A GOOD LESSON, I USUALLY HAVE A "SPONGE" ACTIVITY TO BEGIN EACH STAFF MEETING. RECENTLY, I CHANGED MY PROCEDURE ONLY TO MEET A STAFF THAT LAUGHINGLY POUNDED ON THE TABLE TOPS AND DEMANDED, "WE WANT A SPONGE." SECONDLY, AT A RECENT MEETING WITH THE BUILDING COMMITTEE, THERE WERE NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT CUSTODIAL SERVICES OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS. INSTEAD, THE REQUESTS WERE FOR ASSISTANCE IN RESPONDING TO STUDENT NEEDS. WE'VE COME A LONG WAY. PHILIPS STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO, BUT AT LEAST, WE ARE ALL STARTING TO USE THE SAME ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE, AND CLASSROOM DOORS ARE OPEN MORE OFTEN THAN CLOSED.

AS A PRINCIPAL OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, I'M PLEASED WITH THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED AT PHILIPS SCHOOL:

- OUR WORK WITH OUR SIAC, STAFF, AND OTHER CONCERNED PERSONS TOLD US THAT WE NEED TO MARKET OURSELVES--THUS, OUR SCHOOL BROCHURE AND A RECENT RECEPTION FOR AREA REALTORS.
- INCREASED INTEREST FROM STUDENTS IN TRACKING THEIR ACADEMIC PROGRESS.

- TEACHER CONFERENCES REGARDING THE ACADEMICS IN WHICH TEACHERS DO MORE TALKING THAN THE PRINCIPAL.
- VOLUNTARY SHARING OF DAILY TEACHING OBJECTIVES BY TEACHING STAFF.
- INCREASED REQUESTS ABOUT THE SCHOOL BY PARENTS OF PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AT THE INTERMEDIATE GRADE LEVELS.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION WILL VARY FROM BUILDING TO BUILDING. HOWEVER, THESE ARE SOME OF THE THOUGHTS FROM DENVER'S PRINCIPALS REGARDING THE IMPACT THE MODEL HAS HAD ON THEIR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS:

1. STAFFS HAVE DISCOVERED PROBLEMS WITH THE COORDINATION OF CURRICULUM CONTENT.
2. TEACHERS HAVE BEGUN TAKING THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN INSTRUCTIONAL CONFERENCES.
3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS VALIDATED WHAT WAS IN OPERATION IN THE BUILDING.
4. "GOOD" TEACHERS RECEIVED RECOGNITION AND CREDIT FOR THEIR EFFORTS.
5. TEACHERS ARE MORE INTERESTED IN RESEARCH AND CITE THE SAME.
6. THE MODEL PROVIDES UNIFORMITY THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.

THAT'S JUST A PARTIAL LISTING OF OUR FINDINGS.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS? WE'RE CONTINUING TO EXAMINE OURSELVES AS WE STRIVE FOR EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND VIABLE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS.